



What the Australian Government is already doing for a healthy, active Australia

Millions of dollars in Australian Government funding are already helping to address obesity and overweight in our community

- **Medicare rebates** are available for services rendered by medical practitioners treating patients for obesity in the private setting in accordance with accepted clinical practice. Funding is also provided by the Australian Health Care Agreements for admitted services and outpatient treatment clinics by public hospitals.
- Recent Australian Government policies have increased the emphasis on preventing chronic disease and contributing risk factors, including obesity, within the primary care system.
- **Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) Medicare items** (introduced in November 1999) provide more preventive care for older Australians and better coordinated care for patients with chronic conditions and complex care needs. While obesity is not itself considered a chronic medical condition for the purposes of EPC items, patients who are eligible for multidisciplinary care may have complications to their chronic medical condition (eg diabetes) arising from obesity.
 - A care plan for such patients should address their health and care needs, including management of their weight and its impact on their chronic medical condition.
- **Indigenous adult health checks** under Medicare (estimated \$7.5 million over four years from 2003-04) have applied from 1 May 2004. They are available every two years for indigenous people aged 15 to 54 years to help prevent and treat chronic illness. Indigenous people have a higher rate of overweight and obesity than the general population and are up to 2.6 times more likely to die from coronary heart disease.
- **Focus on Prevention** measures from the 2003-04 Budget will increase the emphasis on prevention in general practice, including through the *Community Awareness and Infrastructure Initiative* (estimated \$4.3 million over three years).
 - 'Lifestyle scripts' are one of the tools being developed for general practitioners to address health risk factors with patients, including overweight or obesity, poor nutrition and physical inactivity.
 - The *Clinical Guidelines for Managing Overweight and Obesity* released by the National Health and Medical Research Council will also be an important part of this approach.
- The **30% Rebate on private health insurance premiums** may also assist with combating obesity as a number of private health insurance funds provide benefits for weight management programmes.
- **National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)** has provided about \$11.3 million in research funding for obesity-related research from 2000-2004 (including \$4.7 million in 2004) and this will continue to be a priority area for future research and funding.
- **National Guidelines for Diet and Physical Activity** have been developed by the NHMRC and been disseminated widely. They provide evidence-based guidance for use by health professionals and 50,000 related consumer resources are distributed each month.
 - *Dietary Guidelines for Australian Adults (2003)*

- *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia (2003)*
- *Dietary Guidelines for Older Australians (1999)*
- *National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australians (1999)*
- Physical Activity Recommendations for Children and Youth (in development)

Improving nutrition, increasing physical activity and fighting overweight and obesity — Australian Government action already under way

FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND AGEING

Rural Chronic Disease Initiative (RCDI)

(for small rural communities)

Funding \$14.2 million total funding, provided under Regional Health Strategy *More Doctors, Better Services (2000 – 2004)*.

Description: The initiative aims to improve the health of small rural communities by organising activities designed to meet local needs and circumstances. The Initiative supports the promotion of healthy lifestyles to assist in the prevention and better management of chronic disease.

The Australian Government funded 29 projects across rural Australia, each designed to find local solutions to local health problems. Although the projects were different, the common approach across all of them was to encourage healthy eating and increased physical activity.

Lessons learned through these projects informed the development of the *Building Healthy Communities Guide* – a practical guide to help other interested communities develop successful projects addressing chronic disease in their rural area.

As part of the continuing commitment to the Rural Health Strategy, announced in the 2004/05 Federal Budget, a new Rural Primary Health Programme is to be established. The Programme will support the development of local primary health projects, which will build on the success of the RCDI model in addressing chronic disease risk factors such as obesity, low levels of physical activity, smoking and harmful alcohol consumption in rural and remote areas of Australia.

National Child Nutrition Programme

(for children (0-12 years of age) and pregnant women)

Funding \$15 million from 1999-2000. Around half the projects are nearing completion and the rest will be finalised by early 2005.

Description: Community grants programme targeting the nutrition and long term eating patterns of children and pregnant women. Designed to improve the nutrition-related knowledge and skills of children and their parents, build capacity in communities to promote better nutritional health, and improve access to and availability of nutritious foods. 109 projects across Australia were funded. High priority was given to projects in rural and remote communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and lower socioeconomic communities. The second round of funding (23 projects) had a specific focus on high need Indigenous communities.

Public Health Education and Research Programme (PHERP) Innovations funding

Sentinel Site for Obesity Prevention

(for children and adolescents: 0 to 5 years, 2 to 12 years and 12 to 18 years.)

Funding \$449,340 from the Australian Government (June 2002 to December 2005) plus \$651,160 from Deakin University.

Description: Trial of community development and intervention programmes in Barwon South West to build the knowledge, skills and evidence necessary to prevent obesity among children and adolescents.

Walk Safely to School Day (4 April 2004)

(for Primary School Aged Children)

- Funding** \$250,000 for the 2004 event (\$150,000 from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing) (\$35,000 between 2001-2003)
- Description:** The Department contributed to a national community awareness event promoting health (physical activity), road safety and public transport, and the environment. Encourages parents and carers to walk to school with primary school aged children, and reinforces safe pedestrian behaviour.

Walk to Work Day (October 2003)

(for all adults)

- Funding** \$512,500 for the 2003 event (\$373,000 from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing). (\$65,000 between 2000-2002)
- Description:** The Department contributed to an annual community awareness campaign run by the Pedestrian Council of Australia (PCA) to promote walking as an alternative to private vehicles, for health and environmental reasons.

Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Overweight and Obesity

(for general practitioners treating patients for overweight and obesity)

- Funding** \$136,000 (2000-2003)
- Description:** Development by the National Health and Medical Research Council of evidence-based guidelines and related information resources for the management of overweight and obesity in children, adolescents and adults by general practitioners. Published in November 2003:
- *Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Overweight and Obesity in Adults*
 - *Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Overweight and Obesity in Children and Adolescents*
 - *Overweight and Obesity in Adults and in Children and Adolescents: A Guide for General Practitioners.*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Child and Maternal Health Exemplar Site Initiative

(for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families)

- Funding** \$528,000 over two financial years, commencing in 2002-03.
- Description:** Identified Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services selected as "best practice" sites in the delivery of child and maternal health services. The initiative identifies dimensions of effective service delivery in order to inform the development of national, regional and local policy development. Three Sites have been established to date. The first site implemented has shown an increase in birth weights and a reduction in pre-term births.

Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council Nutrition Project

(for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mothers, babies and other carers)

- Funding** \$120,000 in 2003/04
- Description:** Nutrition project for mothers, babies and other carers in the remote Central Australian region. This is a unique style of Project that has been funded with up to \$74,000 annually since 1998. An external evaluation of the Project is planned for 2004/05.

Diabetes Prevention Pilot Initiative

(for Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people in the general community who have diabetes)

- Funding** \$658,000 over 2 years from July 2004.

Description: The Diabetes Prevention Pilot Initiative will improve the prevention and detection of Type II Diabetes by funding community based demonstration initiatives that involve implementation of recommendations from the NHMRC Guidelines on the Prevention and Detection of Type II Diabetes. In accordance with the guidelines, projects aim to increase physical activity, improve diet and achieve a healthy weight for people at risk of developing diabetes.

National Diabetes Improvement Projects (NDIP)

(for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse people, people in rural and remote areas, adolescents with diabetes, women who have or have had Gestational Diabetes Mellitus).

Funding \$1,010,386 from June 2003 to January 2005

Description: 18 National Diabetes Improvement Projects (NDIP) commenced mid-2003 to improve services for people with diabetes. Designed to provide funding for local communities to trial new and innovative strategies to enhance the early detection and management of diabetes. 11 of the projects include an element of healthy lifestyle as part of the self management focus.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Statistics

(for students, interested members of the public, academics, media, other government and non-government agencies)

Funding \$84,526 in 2002-2004

Description: Statistical bulletins on overweight and obesity to increase the accessibility of data for researchers and policy makers. Released in 2003/04:

- *Health, wellbeing and body weight.*
- *Obesity trends in older Australians.*
- *Are all Australians gaining weight?*
- *A growing problem: Trends and patterns in overweight and obesity among adults in Australia, 1980 to 2001.*

www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/hlthwt and www.aihw.gov.au

Australian Government Breastfeeding Initiatives

(for mothers, fathers, pregnant and breastfeeding women, children 0-5 years)

Funding \$800,000 (approximately) for the Australian Breastfeeding Association, Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative and Perth Infant Feeding Study.

Description: Children who are breastfed are less likely to become obese and breastfeeding can help mothers return to their pre-pregnancy weight.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association will receive \$100,000 in Australian Government funding for 2004-05, extending the previous three year funding agreement.

The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (via the Australian College of Midwives, currently funded to June 2004) is an international programme to improve maternity facilities and practices known to promote the health and wellbeing of the mother and baby and to encourage breastfeeding.

The Perth Infant Feeding Study – Mark 2 (via Curtin University, currently funded to June 2004) tracks maternal feeding practices over a 12-month period.

Smoking Nutrition Alcohol and Physical Activity (SNAP) Framework for General Practice

(for policy/project officers in government, community and the broader health sector providing services and support to general practice)

Funding Covered by departmental funds.

Description: Aims to help general practices support patients address their lifestyle risk factors, including nutrition and physical inactivity. Promotes:

- building on areas of good clinical practice and current structures;
- minimising administrative workloads; and
- building stronger links with other health service providers.

Communication Strategies

(for students, general public, academics, media, government agencies, NGOs)

Funding Covered by departmental funds.

Description: The *Healthy Active* website contains practical tips for families and children on how to choose healthy foods and be more active. It was launched in November 2003 as part of the Australian Government's response to the National Obesity Taskforce's national agenda for children and families, Healthy Weight 2008. www.healthyactive.gov.au

PaperWeight is the Department of Health and Ageing's newsletter on overweight and obesity, distributed electronically twice a year. It draws attention to issues about overweight and obesity and initiatives within the Government and non-government sectors to address.

Bone Health for Life website (\$66,000 funding) provides practical advice for women and health professionals to improve bone health and prevent or manage osteoporosis. It provides strong encouragement for exercise and its many health benefits. www.bonehealthforlife.org.au

Be Active Australia – Draft National Physical Activity for Health Action Plan

Funding \$25,000 for development of the Plan in 2003-04.

Description: A priority of the National Obesity Taskforce, this Action Plan will identify a set of national level actions to be addressed by the health sector, including collaboration with other sectors, to support inactive Australians to be sufficiently active for a health benefit. The Plan will guide and inform a more coordinated, collaborative and strategic approach at the national level.

Australian Longitudinal Study of Women's Health (Women's Health Australia)

Target Group(s): Students, interested members of the public, academics, media, other government and non-government agencies.

Funding \$3.2 million over four years from 2004-2005.

Description: Research and published articles includes the impact of weight and exercise, dieting and eating disorders on health outcomes based on longitudinal data collected since 1996. Recently published articles include:

- Effects of physical activity on emotional well-being among older Australian women: cross sectional and longitudinal analyses.
- Psychological stress, coping and symptoms of disordered eating in a community sample of young Australian women .
- Who does not gain weight? Prevalence and predictors of weight maintenance in young women.
- Dieting and health in young Australian women.

FROM THE AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION

Out of School Hours Sports Programme (with State agencies)

(for primary school aged children)

Funding \$195,000 in 2003-04 to pilot the programme in five States.

Description: Pilot sites in NSW Victoria, WA, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Entry-level and modified sporting experiences are being used to provide structured physical activity programmes to children in after-school care centres by linking existing infrastructure to the community. There has been a strong take-up rate and support from families for the pilot project.

Active Australia Schools network

(for schools)

Funding \$420,000 in 2003-04

Description: The Active Australia Schools Network (AASN) is for schools across Australia that share an interest in sport and physical activity and value the contribution of 'being active' to the overall health and well being of young people and communities. The AASN supports schools to make links with local sporting organisations as a way of providing great opportunity for young people to access quality sports programmes. It also facilitates professional development for teachers delivering sports programmes within the schools curriculum.

Targeted Sports Participation Growth Programme (TSPGP) (with the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts)

(for juniors, women and adults, in metropolitan and regional areas)

Funding \$11.53 million over the life of the project (commenced 2002)

Description: The TSPGP focuses on increasing participation in organised sport, particularly at the club level. The policy also seeks to find new ways of establishing partnerships between sport and business to enhance the sustainability of participation growth. The Programme targets a small number of sports for special support, to grow their business by expanding active membership of clubs and associations.

Indigenous Sport Programme (with the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts)

(for Indigenous Australians)

Funding \$4.7 million from ASC and ATSIS in 2003/04

Description: The Indigenous Sport Unit has engaged 16 National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) and assisted them in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of specific initiatives aimed at increasing participation in all areas of sport by Indigenous Australians.

FROM THE DEPARTMENT FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004-2008

The Prime Minister and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs have announced \$365.8 million over four years for the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. This programme is expected to include opportunities to address health issues, including obesity and related risk factors, in children and families. One example is described below.

A programme under the 'Early Childhood - Invest To Grow' funding stream – National Aboriginal Sports Corporation Australia (NASCA)

(for Indigenous parents and young children)

Funding \$500,000 over four years

Description: NASCA will develop and pilot a model for improving access to information and support for Indigenous parents and young children, in consultation with health care professionals and Indigenous communities. The model will then be rolled out in up to 40 communities.

FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES

Australia Cycling: the National Strategy, 1999–2004 (with the Australian Bicycle Council)

(for policy and decision makers across all levels of government, members of the community and relevant professionals)

Funding \$100,000 in 2003/04 for two projects, Parameters to Prioritise Cycle Infrastructure Proposals and Whole of life costings of cycle projects.

Description: The Australian Bicycle Council (ABC) is a national inter-governmental committee that manages and coordinates implementation of Australia Cycling - The National Strategy 1999-2004. The ABC's objective is to increase safe cycling and remove impediments to cycling to achieve its vision: Increased cycling for transport and recreation to enhance the well-being of all Australians.

FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Cycle Connect

(for adults who are able to incorporate cycling into their regular travel)

Funding \$2.4m over two financial years (2004-05 and 2005-06)

Description: Active transport infrastructure initiative to provide secure parking, mostly in the form of bike lockers, at suburban bus and train stations to encourage commuters to cycle rather than drive to the station. There will be two rounds of grants, for 2004-05 and 2005-06. Proposals have been received from state and local governments offering matched funding and in-kind contributions.

FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

'Choose Health – Be Active' consumer resource

(for Australians over the age of 60)

Funding \$60,000 from DVA and \$60,000 from Department of Health and Ageing.

Description: Illustrates simple ways to keep fit as part of a daily routine, in order to increase the amount of physical activity undertaken by older Australians. Includes an activity planner, descriptions of different types of exercise, and advice on coping with health problems and overcoming set backs.

Cooking for One or Two programme

(for men who are now required to cook for themselves, some women members of the veteran community over the age of 50)

Funding Nil – funded through grants

Description: A six week series of classes to give men and women over the age of 50 practice at cooking easy, quick and nutritious meals. Raises awareness of food and nutrition in the veteran community, through the promotion of prevention strategies and early identification and intervention of 'at risk' veterans. Developed in partnership with Nutrition Australia.